

PART IV

The Pattern of Agriculture

Farms: Number and Size

Farms have been increasing in number and becoming larger in size in Kittitas County. In 1954 there were 1,131 farms, the largest number since 1940. The average size was 602 acres, almost twice the average in 1940 and larger than the state average of 270 acres per farm. Kittitas ranks fourteenth among Washington counties in the average size of farm operations.

The trend toward larger holdings is caused by several practices of modern farmers. Many smaller farms have been purchased or leased and consolidated with larger units. Successful livestock farmers have added former range land and forest land to their holdings in order to increase the available range for their herds. Increased use of machinery in grain and hay farming has enabled individual farmers to purchase, lease and manage more cropland. Increased values of land have caused many small acreages to be offered for sale. Many family farms of small size have been sold by heirs in the final disposition of land estates developed by their pioneer fathers. This trend has been common to the livestock and grain farming counties of eastern Washington.

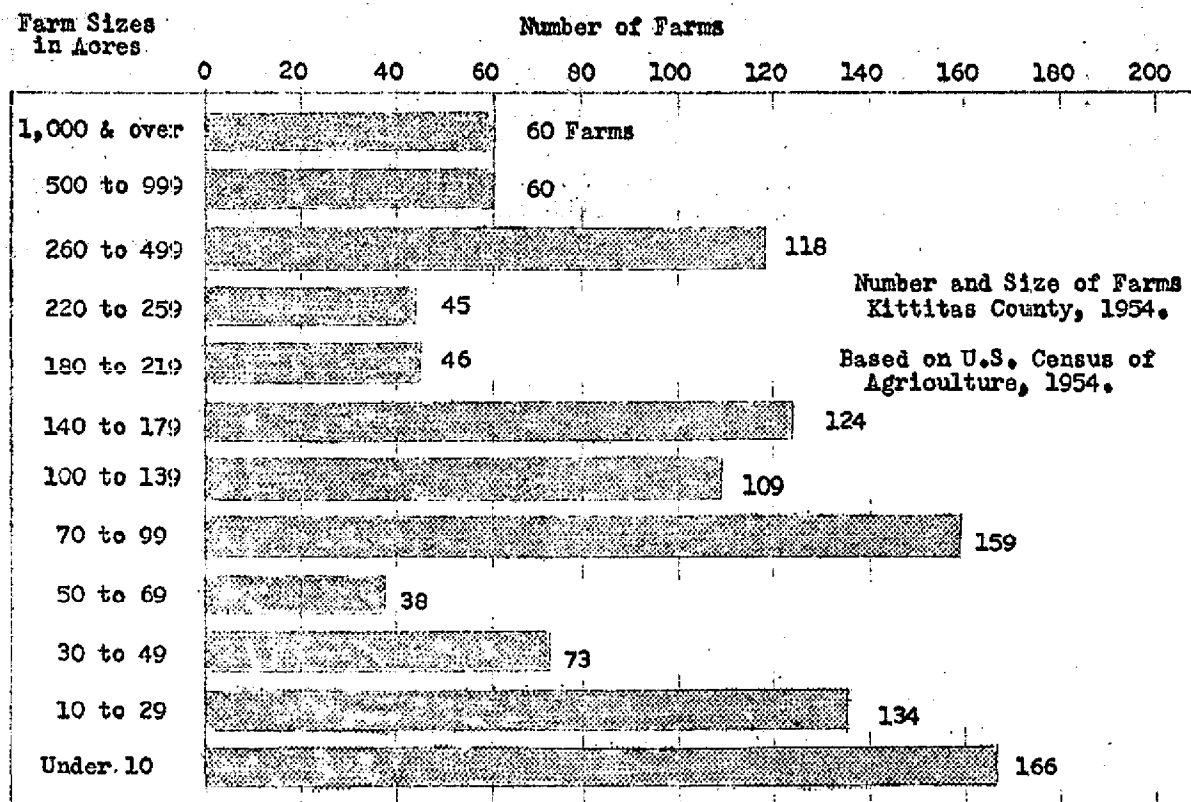


Figure 7:- Number and Size of Kittitas County Farms, 1954.

Large Farms

The higher dryland area of Kittitas County is locally termed "ranching country". The ranches are quite often large cattle or sheep raising operations with hundreds of acres of grass range or open forested pastures. Climatic conditions and its influence on the development of large-scale livestock raising has resulted in the pattern of large farms. In 1954 there were 60 farms in Kittitas County which had 1,000 acres or more. Of this number, 18 exceeded 5,000 acres. These large ranching units have 522,150 acres under management, or over three-fourths of all the land in farms within the county. Cultivated crop land on the large farms totals 13,000 acres which is only a small portion of the county total. On the large ranches the major land use is in non-harvested land, mainly range and woodland pasture for cattle and sheep.

Table 9:- Large Farms: Number and General Land Use
Kittitas County, 1954

Land Utilization on Large Farms	Farms 1,000 to 4,999 acres	Farms 5,000 acres and over
Number of farms-----	42 farms	18 farms
Land in farms-----	86,054 acres	436,103 acres
Cropland harvested-----	7,827 acres	5,269 acres
Cropland used only for pasture-	3,179 acres	2,578 acres
Cropland not harvested and not pastured (idle, fallow land)-	1,345 acres	738 acres
Woodland Pastured-----	25,003 acres	94,390 acres
Woodland not Pastured-----	2,465 acres	160 acres
Other pasture (not cropland and not woodland)-----	44,294 acres	332,336 acres

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Table 10:- Farms, Number and Average Size, Land in Farms,
Kittitas County, 1900-1955

Year	Total Farms in County	Total County Area in Farms	Average Size of Farms
		(acres)	(acres)
1900	699	199,085	285
1910	871	262,605	301
1920	928	215,918	233
1925	818	440,689	539
1930	888	359,003	404
1940	1,196	466,401	390
1945	1,111	608,394	548
1950	1,129	649,092	575
1955	1,131	680,672	602

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Contrasting with some other Washington counties where land in farms is decreasing and going into non-farm uses, the total acreage in farms in Kittitas County has been increasing. In the 1954 census, a new high of 680,672 acres was recorded as compared with about 466,000 acres in 1940. More land in recent years has come under private farm management. Irrigation has brought some state and federal public lands and railroad grant lands into farms through purchase or lease. Livestock men have leased public and private lands for grazing which formerly were classified as non-farm land. Some farms have purchased adjacent acreage to manage as farm woodlands or pastures.

Types of Farms

Livestock and general farming predominates in Kittitas County. About one-fourth of the farm operations are of the general diversified type. Nearly one-fifth are cattle and sheep livestock farms, and one-sixth are dairy farms. The most common type of crop-raising farms are those growing grain and hay. Specialized fruit and vegetable farms are relatively few in number compared to neighboring Yakima and Chelan Counties.

Table 11:- Types of Farms, Kittitas County, 1955

Type of Farm	Number of Farms	% of all Farms
Total Farms in county-----	1,602	
Field-Crop farms-----	112	7
Cash-grain-----	92	.6
Other field-crop-----	20	1
Vegetable farms-----	5	.3
Fruit-and-nut farms-----	16	1
Dairy farms-----	196	12
Poultry farms-----	25	2
Livestock farms other than dairy and poultry-----	269	17
General farms-----	290	18
Primarily crop-----	133	8
Primarily livestock-----	31	2
Crop and livestock-----	126	8
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms-----	287	17.7

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1954.

Farm Ownership and Tenure

A large majority, about 70 out of 100 farmers, own their land and buildings. Tenancy, or the renting and leasing of entire farms characterizes only 13 percent of Kittitas County farm operations. The high percentage of farm

ownership indicates that many farms have remained in the families of the pioneers who established them, and that many prefer to buy rather than rent land.

Since 1925 there has been a considerable increase in farms which are part-owned. In the part-owner system a portion of a farm is rented from others on a share-crop or share-profit basis. Generally the part-owner owns the buildings. Many elderly people live in retirement on farms and lease part of their land to a neighbor. The consolidation of farms into larger units for more efficient use of machinery is a trend which is slowly decreasing full ownership of farms and expanding part-ownership.

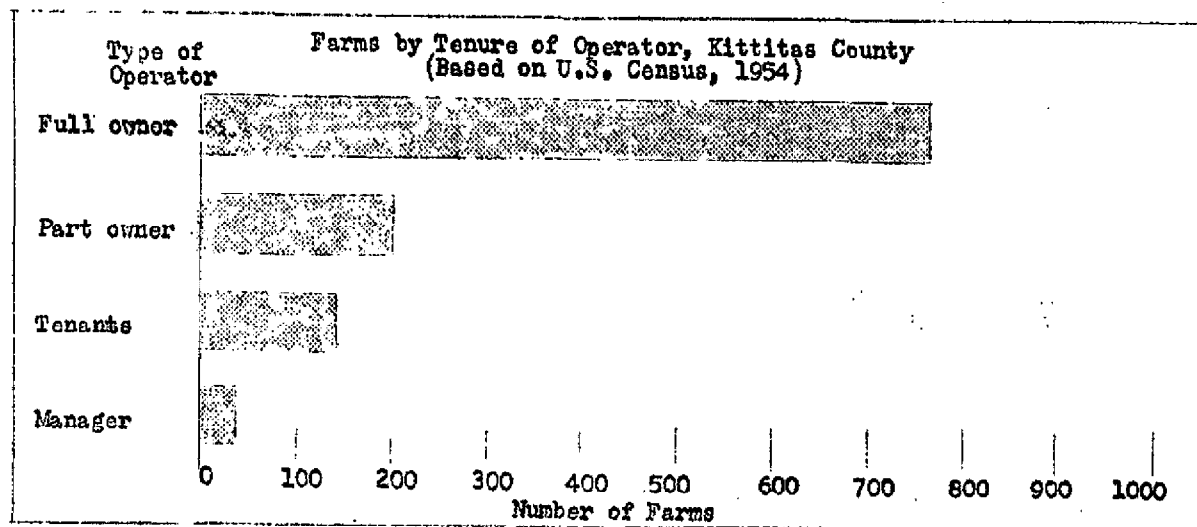


Figure 8:- Farms by Tenure of Operator, Kittitas County, 1954.

Table 12:- Farm Tenancy, Number and Percent of Farms
By Tenure of Operator, Kittitas County, 1925-1955

Year	Number of Farms	Full Owners		Part Owners		Managers		Tenants	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1925	618	476	58.2	116	14.2	14	1.7	212	25.9
1930	888	517	58.2	153	17.2	21	2.4	197	22.2
1935	1,232	720	58.4	147	11.9	32	2.6	333	27.0
1940	1,196	716	59.9	166	13.9	10	.8	304	25.4
1945	1,111	710	63.9	175	15.8	22	2.0	204	18.4
1950	1,128	808	71.6	174	15.4	14	1.2	133	11.8
1955	1,131	763	67.5	206	18.2	19	1.7	143	12.6

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture.

Farmland Utilization

Nearly two-thirds of the farmland in Kittitas County is non-wooded pastures. Woodland pasture is the second most extensive use. There are 284 farms in the county who shared in the ownership of 6,478 acres of woodland and 134,576 acres

of post-red woodland in 1954. Kittitas ranks eighth in the state in the total area of farm woodlands. Cropland harvested amounted to 76,863 acres in 1954, and cleared pasture land, 17,847 acres. By specializing in livestock, use is made of the hilly and mountainous pine forest uplands where bunchgrass and other plants are grazed by cattle and sheep.

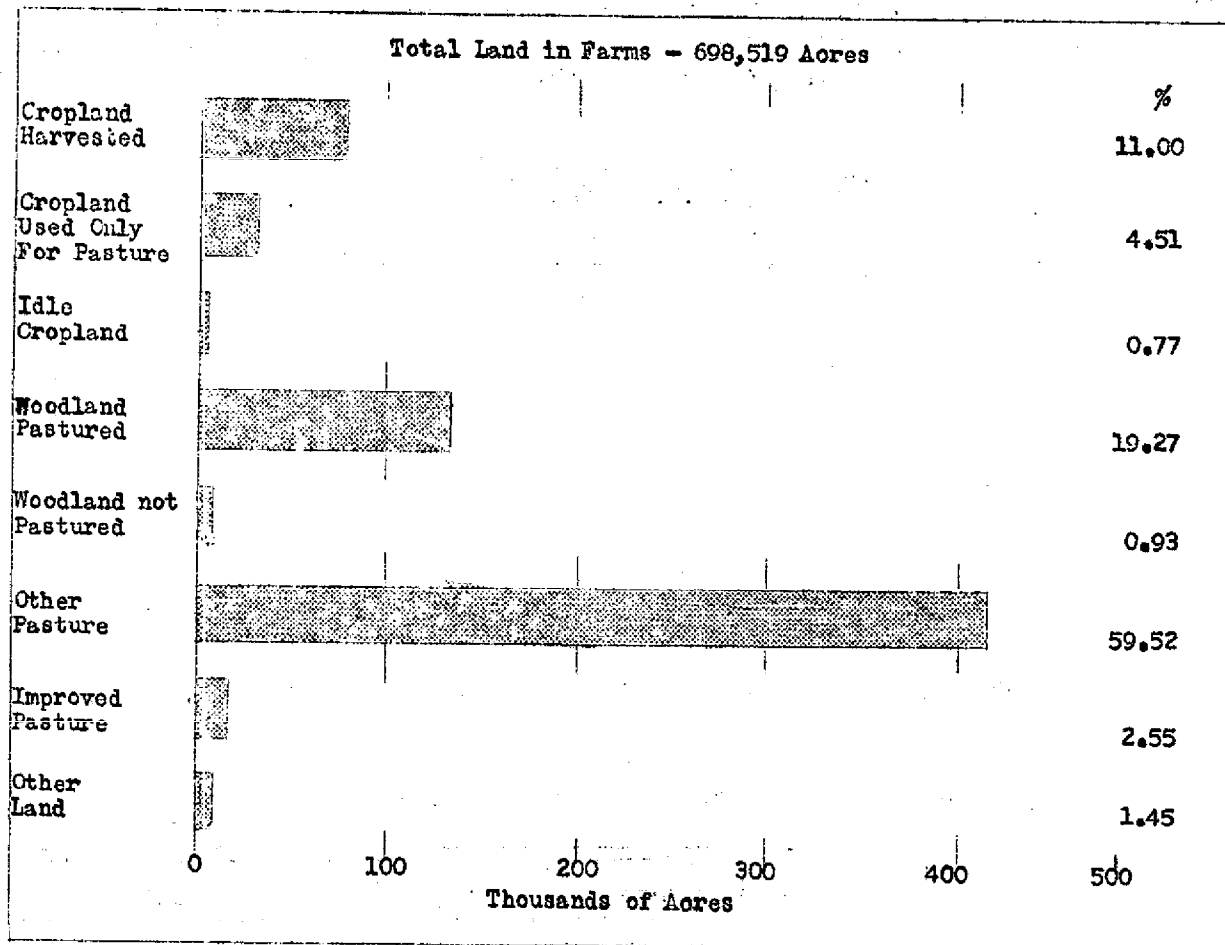


Figure 9:- Utilization of Farmland in Kittitas County, 1955.

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture, 1954.

Farm Residence and Operation

Kittitas County is characterized by a large proportion of workers residing on farms and dividing their labor between agriculture and off-farm work. In a forested and mining region such as Kittitas County, farmers have numerous seasonal opportunities to work in nearby mills, logging operations and mines. County, state and federal government work in highway maintenance, forest protection and resource conservation also provide seasonal employment. About 500 farm operators out of 1,131, or about 45 percent of all Kittitas farmers, earned some income from off-farm work in 1954. About one-third of the farm operators worked 100 days or more per year in other industries. They earned annual wages which exceeded the value of farm products sold from their lands, according to the 1954 Census.

Farm Facilities

In 1954 Kittitas County agriculture as a whole was about average in the use of machinery, facilities and utilities which make rural life easier. A few livestock and small-scale farms in remote mountain valley localities reduced the general standard. In the accessible, irrigated farming areas, and on larger livestock ranches, however, farm home living standards and farm mechanization were far above national averages and were on a par with some of the best farming districts of the state.

A high percentage of farm homes are served with electricity and telephones, but television use is small. Few Kittitas farms have television sets and this convenience is far below that of counties near the major television transmitting stations in Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane and Portland. Kittitas County is located beyond major television reception zones and the Cascade Mountains interrupt reception from Seattle and Yakima.

Farm mechanization, electrification and use of labor saving machinery is well advanced. Being important in the production of commercial hay, the county ranks fifth in the state in the use of hay balers, over one sixth of the farms having this equipment. Field forage harvesters (silage cutters and mowing machinery) also are heavily used, Kittitas farmers having 45 forage harvesters and 1,447 wheeled tractors with mowing attachments. It ranks eighth in the use of power feed grinders used principally in preparing feeds for beef livestock.

Table 13:- Specified Facilities and Equipment on Farms,
Kittitas County, 1955

Facility or Equipment Item	Number of Farms Using	Percent of All Farms in County Equipped
Telephone-----	1,050	92.8
Electricity-----	1,100	97.0
Television set-----	96	8.5
Piped running water-----	1,080	96.0
Home freezer-----	429	37.9
Electric pig brooder-----	15	1.3
Power feed grinder-----	200	17.7
Milking machine-----	349	30.9
Grain combines-----	175	15.5
Corn pickers-----	6	.5
Pick-up balers-----	272	24.0
Field forage harvesters-----	45	4.0
Artificial ponds, reservoirs and earth tanks-----	108	9.5
Motortrucks-----	840	74.3
Tractors-----	930	82.2
Automobiles-----	1,040	92.0

Source: United States Bureau of the Census
1954 Census of Agriculture.

Irrigation Facilities

In common with general trends more irrigation facilities are being added and more crop and pasture land is receiving water. Some of the newer facilities are individual farm installations of wells, pumps and sprinkler systems. Mainly located on the more sloping fringes of the Kittitas Valley which is canal and ditch-irrigated, another 7 farms have added irrigation since 1950. Irrigated acreage has gone up from 107,033 acres in 1945 to 111,856 acres in 1954. In recent years more irrigation water has been applied to pastures. Irrigated pasture increased from 27,000 acres to 41,000 acres between 1950 and 1955. Most of the irrigation is used to grow crops and amounted to about 70,660 acres in 1954 which was 92 percent of all the cropland harvested. Alfalfa hay, wheat, corn and potatoes are the leading irrigated crops.

Table 14:- Irrigation: Farms and Acreage
Kittitas County, 1945, 1950 and 1955

Farms and Acreage	1945	1950	1955
Number of Farms Reporting Use of Irrigation	1,012	1,008	1,015
Acreage Irrigated in the County ^{1/}	107,033	105,342	111,856
Crops Irrigated (acres)	no data	76,846	70,760
Pasture Irrigated (acres)	no data	27,363	41,196

^{1/} Includes land irrigated by sprinklers.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Farm Values

The value of land and farm buildings per acre has about doubled since the low prices of the 1930's. In the early years of settlement before the Kittitas Project irrigation works were built, land was valued at \$16.00 per acre or less. A land boom after World War I created by new irrigation works and strong markets for livestock, hay and grain raised the value to about \$73.50 per acre in 1920, making the average farm worth over \$17,000. In the economic depression of the 1930's per acre values fell to about \$24.00. Land and farm values raised rapidly in the 1950's to an average of \$72.00 per acre and \$34,000 per farm. A general rise in real estate values in Washington, investments in new buildings, land improvements, and irrigation facilities have resulted in this increased value of Kittitas farm property. All farm property of Kittitas County was worth an estimated \$38,519,600 according to the census of 1954.

Table 15:- Value of Farm Property
Kittitas County, 1900-1954

Year	Total Value All Farm Property in County	County Average Values	
		Per Farm (dollars)	Per Acre (dollars)
1900	\$ 3,186,420	\$ 4,552	\$16.00
1910	11,491,850	16,657	55.00
1920	18,942,173	17,106	73.50
1930	11,377,961	16,191	40.00
1935	11,466,858	9,588	24.60
1950	33,536,945	29,705	65.00
1954	38,519,598	34,058	72.00

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

Table 16.- Kittitas County's Rank Compared With
Other Washington Counties

Item Compared	Rank	Quantity	Year
<u>General</u>			
Land area.....	7	1,481,600 acres	1954
Number of farms.....	16	1,131 farms	1954
Land in farms--percent.....	17	46 percent	1954
Average size of farms.....	14	602 acres	1954
Cropland harvested.....	16	76,860 acres	1954
Rural farm population.....	19	4,890 persons	1950
Total county population.....	20	21,700 persons	1955
<u>Cash farm income</u>			
Value of all farm products sold..	15	9,716,000 dollars	1954
Value of livestock sold.....	2	4,142,100 dollars	1954
Value of crops sold.....	18	4,010,840 dollars	1954
<u>Livestock on farms</u>			
All cattle and calves.....	4	71,000 head	1956
Milk cows.....	19	6,130 head	1954
Hogs.....	20	1,700 head	1954
Chickens.....	20	45,400 birds	1954
Horses and mules.....	5	2,100 head	1954
Sheep and lambs.....	2	21,000 head	1954
<u>Dairy and poultry products sold</u>			
Value of dairy products sold.....	14	1,253,700 dollars	1954
Whole milk sold.....	15	30,949,000 pounds	1954
Value of poultry products sold...	23	175,000 dollars	1954
Chickens sold.....	28	17,650 birds	1954
Eggs sold.....	15	419,000 dozen	1954
<u>Important crops harvested</u>			
Alfalfa.....	5	33,000 acres	1955
Wheat.....	17	10,720 acres	1955
Timothy-clover.....	6	11,200 acres	1955
Oats.....	3	9,800 acres	1955
Potatoes.....	4	2,450 acres	1955

Source: U.S. Censuses of Agriculture, 1950, 1954.